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ABSTRACT

This study of the notional-functional approach to second language teaching reviews the history and theoretical background of the method, current issues, and implementation of a notional-functional syllabus. Chapter 1 discusses the history and theory of the approach and the organization and advantages of the notional-functional syllabus. Chapter 2 outlines current issues in the design of the syllabus, discusses the question of oral language proficiency, and describes the provisional oral proficiency guidelines pubilshed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The chapter also explains the role of grammar and its application to oral proficiency goals, proposes to integrate grammar into a notional-functional syllabus through the use of the computer, and discusses the adaptation of currently-used textbooks. Chapter 3 explores the process of creating a notional-functional syllabus and investigates the activities that could be used to implement it. The manner in which the material could be ordered is illustrated with a three-level sample syllabus. Activities concerning the integration of grammatical structures are included as well as a discussion of classroom experience. Recommendations based on the discussion and predicted results of those recommendations are presented. (Author/MSE)

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THE NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH: TEACHING THE REAL LANGUAGE IN ITS NATURAL CONTEXT

by

Elaine F. Laine

A Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
French

Committee:

M Chamberlain _____ Director

Mark D. Boldin _____

Raymond L. Page _____

M Francescato _____ Department Chairperson

_____ Dean of the Graduate School

Spring 1985
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia

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THE NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH: TEACHING THE REAL LANGUAGE IN ITS NATURAL CONTEXT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at George Mason University.

By

Elaine Frances Laine
B.A. French
Purdue University
May 1973

Director: Jeffrey T. Chamberlain
Assistant Professor of French
Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

Spring 1985
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia

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ABSTRACT

THE NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH:
TEACHING THE REAL LANGUAGE
IN ITS NATURAL CONTEXT

Elaine F. Laine

George Mason University, 1985

Thesis Director: Dr. Jeffrey T. Chamberlain

During the late sixties, an awareness arose in Europe concerning the need for adults to be orally proficient in a second language. Current methodologies were not addressing this need and as a result of the need for effective approaches to second language teaching, the Notional-Functional approach was proposed by the Council of Europe. The history and theory of the Notional-Functional approach is addressed in Chapter one as well as the organization and advantages of a Notional-Functional syllabus.

Chapter two presents current issues concerning the design of the Notional-Functional syllabus, the question of oral proficiency, and a description of the provisional oral proficiency guidelines published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The role of grammar, its importance, and its application to oral proficiency goals are also explained in this chapter. In addition, a proposal to integrate grammar into a Notional-Functional syllabus

through the use of the computer is suggested as well as a discussion of adapting currently used textbooks to a Notional-Functional syllabus.

Chapter three addresses not only the creation of a Notional-Functional syllabus but also the many activities which could be used in order to implement the syllabus. The manner in which the material could be ordered is discussed with the aid of a three-level sample syllabus. Activities concerning the integration of grammatical structures are included as well as a discussion of my personal classroom experience.

The concluding remarks contain recommendations directed towards the issues presented and some predictions of the results of the recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

I became interested in the Notional-Functional approach during the summer of 1984 while I was working on the revision of the Program of Studies in Foreign Language for Fairfax County Public Schools in Fairfax, Virginia. My curriculum specialist, Dr. Maria Wilmeth, encouraged the writing of a syllabus for all four levels of each target language. The writing of these syllabuses was the first step in applying the Notional-Functional approach to the classrooms in Fairfax County.

Based on my surveys, many students answered the question "What do you plan to receive from your language study?" by responding "To be able to speak the target language." I feel that one of the main objectives should be to teach the students to be orally proficient in the target language. More communicative activities should be integrated into the program so that the students will leave the classroom able to communicate in the target language.

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is not only to present a new approach to foreign language teaching but also to address the concept with constructive techniques which can easily be used at the elementary or secondary level as well

as at the university level. This approach is known as the Notional-Functional approach. The concept stems from a need for oral proficiency in the target language in or outside of the classroom. Speaking and being understood are of primary importance and the teaching of grammar, be it through reading short stories or selected exercises, is secondary. The thesis not only defines and discusses the major components of the concept, but also shows the application of each one in the classroom.

Chapter one defines the Notional-Functional approach with the aid of examples and it addresses the origin and history of the Notional-Functional concept. In addition, a Notional-Functional syllabus is outlined and explained.

Chapter two addresses the Notional-Functional concept as it appears in the current literature. Chapters from current textbooks are examined as to their adaptability to the Notional-Functional approach. The question of the incorporation of grammar into a Notional-Functional syllabus is also addressed in the second chapter.

Examples from a French syllabus are presented in chapter three including an explanation of each category and how the Notional-Functional approach might be applied in the classroom during a three-year program. Since I am currently using this approach in some of my classes, I also address some strengths and weaknesses involved in such an approach, and suggest other activities which could be incorporated

into an oral proficiency oriented program. Recommendations directed towards the issues presented and some predictions of the results of the Notional-Functional approach constitute the concluding remarks.

Many teachers feel that there should be a better way to teach a second language; however, they are unable to begin a new approach such as the Notional-Functional concept due to the organization of the current text, lack of time, or lack of materials. In consideration of the above, many teachers would be overwhelmed by the enormity of the task.

I feel that a teacher could best benefit from this approach based on the fact that the Notional-Functional syllabus is only a guideline. The teacher decides, according to the students' needs, which units to cover. In that way, everyone benefits from useful and real language. As a result of addressing the needs, contextual learning is realized. This philosophy was attractive to me and consequently resulted in the writing of this thesis. I am not advocating the Notional-Functional approach as a panacea for teaching students to be orally-proficient; rather, I am presenting my findings in a form for utilization not only by the foreign language specialist, but also by the classroom instructor. Ultimately, the instructor will be the judge of the effectiveness of the Notional-Functional approach.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH: ITS HISTORY AND THEORY

1.1 ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

The history of teaching foreign languages includes methods and techniques which have ranged from the grammar-translation method, total immersion, the structural approach, to the audio-lingual and situational methods. Each time the new method tried to make up for the deficiencies of its predecessor. During the late sixties in Europe, an awareness arose concerning the need for adult foreign language education. Adults who had already received a secondary or university degree needed more foreign language instruction in their specialized area. Thus, the need for effective approaches to second language teaching became evident.

The Committee for Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development (a division of the Council for Cultural Co-Operation of the Council of Europe) discussed, researched and defined the concept for the Notional-Functional

approach. The list of Committee participants included J. A. van Ek, M. Kuhn, Heinz Lowak, R. Nowacek, G. E. Perren, René Richterich, E. Roulet, Sven Lalin Eert, Fritz Satzinger, John L. M. Trim (President/Chairman), and David Wilkins.[1]

In the same report, the Committee studied the idea of having an adult education program grant a certain amount of credit for linguistic proficiency. This unit/credit plan would grant internationally recognized credit to any adult studying a second language. After the completion of several units, the student would be granted credits representative of his progress. A meeting on 11 and 12 September 1972 in Strasbourg, France, concluded the following:

1.) The Committee reaffirmed that it should define language learning principles based on a large multi-media units/credits system.

2.) Three papers clarifying theoretical and methodological aspects of certain basic problems were examined and together formed a basis for the further development of the unit/credit system; namely:

(a) "A Model for the Definition of Adult Language Needs" by René Richterich proposes a list of elements needed to serve as reference points when analyzing objective language needs. Richterich also put forth a method for defining the content of each learning unit and its pedagogic strategies.

(b) "The Linguistic and Situational Content of the Common Core in the Unit/Credit System," by D. A. Wilkins, attempts to define the amount of grammatical knowledge a student must have before participating in situational units. Instead of revamping a grammatical syllabus, Wilkins suggests a notional approach which would allow the learner to communicate his needs through language.

(c) "Proposal for a Definition of a Threshold Level in Foreign Language Learning by Adults," by J. A. van Ek, puts forth a definition of a basic competence level (threshold level) below which further levels cannot be usefully distinguished. The threshold level represents the terms of the learner's linguistic capability and to what extent it could be sustained.[2]

With the objective language needs stated and a method of identifying them, language teaching can benefit a vast number of learners. In order to achieve this, the notional approach was proposed and grammar syllabuses were rejected. The oral proficiency objective not only gave birth to the proposal of the notional syllabus but also liberated the learner and teacher from the structured text. Instead of the grammar being the sole basis of syllabus organization, this new approach provided the opportunity to utilize grammar and vocabulary as the vehicle to convey students' needs. The Notional-Functional approach is designed to allow learners to direct their conversation according to

their needs in any given situation.

In June of the following year (1973), the Committee for Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development met again after a year of research and stated its objectives:

1.) to separate language into units and sub-units based on an analysis of adult learners, in order to arrive at the notion of "common core." In addition, each core would have specialist extensions at different proficiency levels.

2.) to create a list of learning objectives based on the analysis of the needs of adult learners.

3.) to formulate a system not only defining the structure of such a multi-media learning concept but also achieving these objectives.[3]

During this meeting the theory of the Notional-Functional concept started to be identified. The Committee recognized the fact that a simplified syllabus with conceptual and functional elements as its foundation would, in the end, sacrifice greater grammatical and lexical complexity. To alleviate this problem, simplistic linguistic forms would be learned at the first (threshold) level. At higher levels, the integration of grammatical structures and lexicon would go through a recycling operation. In any given situation, a wider range of language forms, more closely reflecting the range of a native speaker, would be learned. This recycling process is

a major characteristic of a Notional-Functional syllabus. Not only does it allow the learner to develop and expand his linguistic performance, but the wider variety of discourse enables him or her to acquire greater self-confidence through his or her performance.[4]

At this same symposium, the use of target language during the early days of study was addressed by Wilkins, who stated that it is imperative to expose the learner, even at the elementary level, to more difficult levels of a language. For example, if a child is exposed to a limited number of grammatical structures, then speech habits will be naturally limited. However, if the child is exposed to normal discourse, he or she will subsequently mimic those linguistic structures in his or her natural speech. In order to integrate a wider range of linguistic structures into the curriculum, a coherent situational and functional policy must be developed. Wilkins acknowledged the fact that the notional concept must complement the grammatical and situational by stating that although the learner controls the language he <u>produces</u> outside the learning situation itself, he cannot control the language he <u>hears</u>.[5] In this case, the provision may well have to be made for exposing the child to a wider range of language than he will be required to produce.

The third area of concern at the symposium was the "threshold level" addressed by van Ek. He discussed the

language needs of a supermarket shopper, for example, by commenting that there exists a discrepancy between the demands made when evaluating a learner as a speaker and as a listener; the shopper needs to understand the language more than just being capable of speaking. The instructor must make sure he knows which skills are being evaluated and to differentiate between communication and pedagogic viewpoints. Van Ek stated that two categories of skill level exist: 1) receptive; 2) productive.

1.) Receptive is the ability to understand normal carefully articulated speech with the memory load being kept to a minimum.

2.) Productive is the ability to communicate the thought or need verbally in such a way that a native speaker of the target language would not have difficulty in understanding the message. Formal grammatical correctness is secondary.[6]

Van Ek concluded that individual needs may vary so widely that decisions on the height of the threshold level will have to be based on grounds other than those of minimum language needs.

The group continues the definition of the Notional-Functional concept by defining the role of vocabulary and that of grammar:

> (1) The lists should provide a vocabulary which ought to satisfy the most basic verbal communications needs of adult learners in those situations in which the

> majority are most likely to find themselves in contact with language speakers.
>
> (2) They should be as short as possible, so as to encourage rather than deter would-be foreign language learners.
>
> The method used is to abstract the vocabulary and grammatical content common to a corpus of existing courses for absolute beginners. It thus reflects the degree of overlap in situations chosen in course books, and the common features represented in those situations....The number is held at about 750 words, as a realistic objective for an absolute beginners' course.[7]

To summarize the different concepts and methods which form the foundation of the Notional-Functional approach, the following elements were identified at the 1973 symposium:

> (a) the establishment of a proper data base in terms of adult language use, learning, motivations and needs for informal planning in these fields;
>
> (b) the elaboration of a system of units differentiated by
>
> (i) linguistic content lexically, grammatically and semantically defined;
>
> (ii) the linguistic operations performed and the situations in which they are set.[8]

This is the framework and foundation on which the Notional-Functional approach began. The next section of this chapter will discuss the "inner support system" identified as the material to be learned by the student, termed the <u>syllabus</u>.

1.2 THE ORGANIZATION OF A NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUS

In the paper "Notional Syllabuses: Theory into Practice", presented at the Colloquium of the Swiss Interuniversity Commission for Applied Linguistics in March of 1976, David Wilkins discussed the theory and practice of the Notional-Functional approach:

> Basically, a notional syllabus aims to organize language teaching in terms of the purposes of communication. Its foundation is a system of notional categories and the determination of forms of language appropriate for the expression of the purposes of communication.... A syllabus providing continuity and the advantages of situational contexts, maximum generalization and coherent presentation of different language functions will have a complex structure. Grammar will not be presented systematically because form and meaning are not in a one-to-one relationship. This leaves unanswered the question of how grammar can be effectively promoted.[9]

The following seven categories are included in the development of a Notional-Functional syllabus:

1. Notion
2. Function
3. Situation
4. Sample Sentences
5. Grammatical Structures
6. Vocabulary/Idioms
7. Culture

1.2.1 NOTION

Constance K. Knop defines the notional category as the topics and ideas that a learner needs to handle. Such general ideas or topics could incorporate the following: Self, Family, Education, Mobility, Health, or Sports, to name a few.[10]

1.2.2 FUNCTION

The function is the purpose for the interaction within a given situation. Guntermann and Phillips define functions as the hundreds of purposes for which people communicate either orally or in writing.[11] The following six categories define the functions of communication as outlined by van Ek:

1) Imparting and seeking factual information (reporting/asking)

2) Expressing and finding out intellectual attitudes (agreeing/disagreeing)

3) Expressing and finding out emotional attitudes (surprise/hope)

4) Expressing and finding out moral attitudes (approval/disapproval)

5) Getting things done (suasion) (advising/warning)

6) Socializing (greeting/departing)[12]

Wilkins appreciates the notional approach because it forces one to consider the communicative value of everything that is taught. He labels functions in the following categories:

1. Modality (to express certainty, necessity)

2. Moral discipline and evaluation (judgment, approval, disapproval)

3. Suasion (persuasion, recommendations)

4. Argument (relating to the exchange of information and views)

5. Rational inquiry and exposition (rational organization of thought and speech)

6. Personal emotions (positive and negative)

7. Emotional relations (greetings, flattery)

8. Interpersonal relations (status and politeness)(formality vs. informality)[13]

An example of the notion of Self is the function of Introductions. These could be on the formal or informal level; students would be taught various utterances to use in each situation.

1.2.3 SITUATION

The third category of the Notional-Functional syllabus is that of Situation. In following the pattern of the syllabus, the situation could be that of formally greeting friends of parents or informally greeting a peer.

Example:

Formally: Bonjour, Madame Thibault, comment allez-vous?

Informally: Salut, Michel. Ça va?

It is within this framework of contextual learning that language is utilized and subsequently learned.

1.2.4 SAMPLE SENTENCES

Category four, Sample Sentences, allows for the student to use basic utterances in order to understand the given concept. This category may need to be enlarged by the teacher because a syllabus would only present a few model sentences. Thus, the teacher must be aware of the students' needs. The adaptability of the syllabus to any given need provides for the creation of an unlimited number of sentences.

1.2.5 GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES

The fifth element of the syllabus addresses the grammatical structures to be utilized in a given notion. A teacher can quickly glance over the syllabus and determine the grammatical structures being taught in a short conversation. The students are using grammar rules without having studied them. When they do encounter the rules in the text, they will already be familiar with the usage, and the use of the syllabus should therefore facilitate the learning of the rules. This is another advantage of the Notional-Functional approach. Several grammatical structures are found in the sample sentences below (Notion: Family, Function: Describing family members, Situation:

Talking with an exchange student):

Mon père est avocat.

Ma mère est avocate.

Possessive adjectives, the use of the verb être in the present tense, and professions, in their masculine and feminine forms (if applicable), are all found in these sentences.

1.2.6 VOCABULARY/IDIOMS

Vocabulary/Idioms is the sixth category. If certain grammatical structures have not been previously introduced, they can be treated as discrete vocabulary items; for example:

1) Je voudrais vous présenter à...

2) S'il vous plaît

3) J'ai faim

The first example uses the conditional tense of vouloir, vouloir + infinitive and "vous" as a direct object. In order to make an introduction, there is no need for a student to learn the entire conditional conjugation of vouloir, or all of the direct object pronouns.

The second example, "s'il vous plaît," uses "vous" as an indirect object pronoun with the verb plaire. A student does not need to learn the list of indirect object pronouns nor the conjugation of plaire in order to say "please."

In order for the student to state that he is hungry, in

the third example, he need not memorize the entire conjugation of avoir. By stating the idiomatic expression "J'ai faim," he would be expressing that he is hungry.

1.2.7 CULTURE

The last category addressed is that of culture. Any cultural item related to a notion is presented in this section. Contained in the notion of Self is the function of greetings; the situation could be an introduction. The cultural aspect could be that of shaking hands or if it were the meeting of a friend the French cheek-to-cheek embrace could be discussed.

The Notional-Functional concept emphasizes language needs categorized by notions and functions. The resulting syllabus is a creation of notions and functions based on communicative needs; grammatical structures are of secondary importance.

1.3 ADVANTAGES OF A NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUS

The objective of the Audio-Lingual method was also oral proficiency but its main drawback was that it was its own worst enemy. It did not provide for improvisations on the part of the students because only rote memorizations and mimicking a speaker on a tape were produced. A Notional-Functional syllabus gives the teacher the advantage to expand the students' capability. With an audio-lingual

background, students were not sufficiently prepared to engage in conversations based solely on memorized expressions. If they did venture into a conversation they were confronted with frustration because the memorized expressions only addressed specific situations. The Notional-Functional approach permits the student to create what he needs in a given situation and to perform at the height of his potential. Theoretically, the student's ability to manipulate his linguistic skills with the learned vocabulary allows him to improvise his speech. As Wilkins states in "Notional Syllabuses: Theory into Practice,"

> Language use is characteristically a process of improvisation based upon a sure command of underlying linguistic skills. Allied with an appropriate methodology, the notional syllabus aims to create a capacity for linguistic improvisation that meets an individual's social and personal needs.[14]

As a result of this ability to improvise, self-confidence should become apparent and the first stage of oral proficiency attained.

A unique feature of a Notional-Functional syllabus is the recycling of vocabulary. In this section, new as well as old vocabulary can be reviewed by the teacher. This is referred to as the cyclic approach. For example:

Cycle I

Notion:	Family
Function:	Describing family members
Situation:	Looking at a family album
Vocabulary/Idioms:	Mother, father, etc.

Cycle II might include not only the original vocabulary from Cycle I for review, but also new and more complex vocabulary such as mother/father-in-law, half-sister/brother, great-grandmother/father. The cyclic element is one of the main attributes of a Notional-Functional syllabus. This is not only found in the category of Vocabulary/Idioms but is also implemented when teaching grammatical structures.[15]

Mary Finocchiaro and Christopher Brumfit list in their book The Functional-Notional Approach from Theory to Practice some additional advantages which express the reasons for the interest in the Notional-Functional approach:

1. The teacher is able to create realistic learning tasks which may be utilized on a group or individualized instruction level.

2. The approach recognizes that the student must have a real purpose for speaking based on personal needs.

3. The Notional-Functional approach provides the learner with the opportunity to use real world language in

the natural situation. This contextual learning facilitates the learning of grammar, vocabulary, and culture. In addition, the grammatical structures and culture can be graded according to the students' priorities in the actual situation and according to the learner's communicative purpose.

4. By making use of the different functions available at the elementary level, the act of communication becomes a motivating factor.

5. Mastery of any given amount of material is not of primary importance. The material is slowly acquired through the use of a cyclical expandable curriculum. Grammatical structures and cultural items can be studied in greater depth whenever relevant during the course of study.[16]

1.4 SUMMARY

The Notional-Functional approach was conceived on the basis of the perception that people need to be orally proficient in a second language. This approach is a totally different concept from preceding methodologies, as it is designed for the development of oral proficiency through the use of contextual learning. Based on the fact that the students are speaking the target language in a specific situation and are able to improvise from situation to situation, the classroom is transformed into a restaurant, an airport or a subway station. This not only leads to

promoting more interest among the students but also motivates them to develop their oral competence so they can express their needs. Constance Knop explains:

> Emphasis is placed on analyzing students' needs and interests in communication and on teaching them utterances to respond to their expressed interest, and because the students do--in fact--communicate on their own early in their learning. The Notional-Functional syllabus appears to offer more motivation to students than most of the materials presently available.[17]

Initially, students are presented sample sentences or questions which facilitate the self-expression of the given function in any notion. After learning basic constructions, they can create situations to suit their needs.

Theoretically, the Notional-Functional approach means functioning verbally through the use of notions. The theory is applied by means of the notional syllabus. "Notion" is the general topic or idea and "Function" is the purpose for the communication. The method by which the function is carried out is up to the teacher, be it student-written dialogues, interviews, plays, or creating a grocery store counter or airline ticket counter. The concept offers many possibilities to the learner: he becomes able to discuss himself, his family, his home, his country, the target country, and the world. The cyclical integration of vocabulary and grammatical structures is one aspect which lends diversity to this approach, and in turn, a Notional-Functional syllabus becomes instrumental in increasing

student motivation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

[1]A European Unit/Credit System in the Field of Adult Language Learning: Report of the Meeting of Experts, ERIC ED 086 013 (September 11 and 12 1972), pp. 6-7.

[2]A European Unit/Credit System, pp. 1-2.

[3]J. L. Trim, Symposium on A Units/Credits System for Modern Languages in Adult Education, ERIC ED 086 006 (17-28 June), p. 13.

[4]Trim, p. 28.

[5]Trim, p. 28.

[6]For more information on the Threshold Level, see J. A. van Ek, Significance of the Threshold Level in the Early Teaching of Modern Languages (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1976), ERIC ED 131 700.

[7]Trim, p. 29.

[8]Trim, p. 30.

[9]David Wilkins, Notional Syllabuses: Theory into Practice, ERIC ED 161 295 (March 1976), p. 1. As stated previously, grammar is secondary and it is addressed in Section 2.4.

[10]Constance K. Knop, "Notional-Functional Syllabus: From Theory to Classroom Applications", in A Global Approach to Foreign Language Education, ed. Maurice W. Conner

(Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1981), pp. 105-121.

[11]Gail Guntermann and June K. Phillips, Functional Notional Concepts Adapting the Foreign Language Textbook (Washington D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982), p. 5.

[12]Jan A. van Ek, The Threshold Level (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980), as cited in Mary Finocchiaro and Christopher Brumfit, The Functional-Notional Approach: From Theory to Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 23.

[13]D. A. Wilkins, Grammatical, Situational and Notional Syllabuses, ERIC ED 136 549 (August 1972), pp. 10-12.

[14]David Wilkins, Notional Syllabuses: Theory into Practice, ERIC ED 161 295 (March 1976), p. 4.

[15]For discussion of cyclical treatment of grammar, see Section 2.4.

[16]Mary Finocchiaro and Christopher Brumfit, The Functional-Notional Approach from Theory to Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 18-19. Other advantages listed by Finocchiaro and Brumfit include:

1) The Notional-Functional approach leads to more emphasis on receptive activities before placing demands on the students to perform prematurely.

2) By virtue of its versatility, the Notional-Functional approach can develop naturally from existing teaching methodology. Teachers could integrate relevant features from

currently used methodologies into a Notional-Functional approach.

3) Because its structure is based on notions, the Notional-Functional approach could be integrated into a language program at any given time during the year.

[17]Knop, p. 130.

CHAPTER TWO

A NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUS: CURRENT ISSUES, ITS DESIGN, AND GRAMMAR

This chapter presents current issues concerning the design of the Notional-Functional syllabus, the question of oral proficiency, and the provisional oral proficiency guidelines published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The role of grammar, its importance, and its application to oral proficiency goals are also examined in this chapter. In addition, a proposal to integrate grammar into the Notional-Functional syllabus through the use of the computer is suggested.

The adaptation of current foreign language textbooks to the Notional-Functional syllabus is discussed, with suggestions for adapting a chapter from a currently used textbook. Since this approach is relatively new, a review of a new textbook based on the Notional/Functional approach is also presented.

The last topic of discussion addresses the implications of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines on the teaching of foreign languages in the future.

2.1 Current Issues

During the past decade, the foreign language teaching profession has been making significant progress in the area of oral proficiency. The creation and utilization of the Notional-Functional syllabus by the Council of Europe, and the attention which oral proficiency has received with the publication of the ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines, have stimulated the writing of many articles and books concerning oral proficiency.

The current pedagogical trends address other communicatively oriented curricula as well as the Notional-Functional syllabus. The literature has brought into perspective the need to define communicative competence and its implication. Higgs and Clifford state:

> A student cannot merely be declared competent in communication. The functions that he is competent to express must be specified. The degree of proficiency required to survive as a tourist or student is not the same as that required to negotiate treaties. One finds that content areas and language functions needed for discussing the abstract ideas differ from those used in telling about one's immediate needs or one's latest European vacation.... We must tell our students not that they are competent to speak German, but that they are competent to meet routine physical and social obligations in an environment where German is spoken.[1]

By using the ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines, a teacher could keep in mind not only the ultimate goal a learner should achieve but also better assess each student's

progress as he continues his study of the target language. Consequently, if the student has a better idea of his accomplishments and follows the Guidelines with the assistance of the teacher, the different levels could serve as a motivational device. Listed below is an outline and brief summary.[2]

The Provisional Guidelines identify four main categories:

1. Novice: Low, Mid, High
2. Intermediate: Low, Mid, High
3. Advanced
4. Superior

The Novice-Low level is assigned to a speaker who is unable to function in the target language except for a few occasional isolated words, while the Novice-Mid speaker can be understood but with much difficulty. The speaker operates only with a limited amount of vocabulary to express elementary needs. The Novice-High speaker, on the other hand, asks questions and uses memorized expressions. Vocabulary is limited to immediate survival needs.

The Intermediate-Low speaker can satisfy his basic needs, ask questions and initiate a simple conversation. To achieve the Intermediate-Mid category, one must be able to give personal history and show a command of some grammatical accuracy in statements. The Intermediate-High speaker can do all of the above in past or future narration but it

cannot be sustained 60% of the time.

The Advanced level is characterized by intelligible constructions such as handling social situations and limited work requirements but does not convey confident control of grammar. The Advanced speaker speaks in paragraphs, describes, and narrates in present, past and future 60% of the time. This speaker may not know the word for dishwasher but he would be able to describe it as a machine which washes dishes. However, the Advanced-Plus speaker is able to communicate with fluency on concrete topics relating to particular interests and work requirements. He is usually strong in vocabulary or grammar but not in both.

The Superior category includes anyone who has a good command of both vocabulary and grammar. The speaker can converse formally and informally but the accent may still be foreign. He can not only participate in role-playing, or persuade and convince, but can also speak on an abstract topic.[3]

Recent articles on the Notional-Functional approach primarily address oral proficiency objectives, the design of the syllabus, and its application to the foreign language classroom.

Because oral proficiency has been identified and recognized as a major objective of foreign language teaching today, reason dictates that the present syllabus, which is usually organized on the basis of grammar, be redesigned.

Valdman states that the optimal pedagogical syllabus should lead the learner to participate in the largest number of communicative transactions in the shortest period of time.[4]

A problem shared by almost every American foreign language student is that of being isolated from the target culture. Perhaps teachers or administrators set goals which are unrealistic, such as fluency at the end of one year of language study. The student usually does not receive much assistance at home because many parents do not have a language background. Valdman continues by arguing that if oral proficiency is the goal of foreign language teaching, then it is the teacher's role to de-emphasize achieving fluency and perfection in the early stages of learning in order not to discourage the students. During this same period, the communicative ability is a motivational factor and must be acknowledged as such. As Valdman confirms:

> By granting minimal achievement in the language a high priority in the early stages of instruction, they [students] might be induced to persevere and, in this way, attain greater overall proficiency and knowledge than if oral practice were referred to more advanced levels.[5]

Valdman's alternative to redesigning the traditional grammar syllabus is based on the selection of appropriate items geared to the level being taught. Too often, material is presented only for the sake of "covering" it.

The second point which Valdman explains is the importance of authentic language. The following dialogues,

using the present tense of the verb aller, are suggested by Wilga Rivers in A Practical Guide to the Teaching of French.[6] Rivers displays two types of dialogues to portray: first, the "grammar vehicle," and second, the natural use of the language.

Paule - Où vas-tu ce soir?
Madeleine - Je vais en ville avec ma famille.
Nous allons au cinéma.
Paule - Qu'est-ce que vous allez voir?
Madeleine - Zazie dans le Métro. Mes cousins vont
voir le même film demain.

This dialogue is essentially a "grammar vehicle" for practicing the conjugation of aller.

Paule - Qu'est-ce que tu fais ce soir?
Madeleine - Je vais au ciné.
Paule - Ah, bon. Quel film est-ce qu'on joue?
Madeleine - Zazie dans le Métro.
Paule - On dit que c'est un bon film. Je peux
aller avec toi, si tu veux.
Madeleine - Euh...C'est...C'est que j'y vais avec mes
parents et aussi avec mon frère et ma soeur.
Alors, euh, tu comprends...

Paule - Ben, oui, je comprends. Pauvre vieille,
tu ne vas pas t'amuser.

The first dialogue is not, strictly speaking, natural language. It is correct French but the situation is contrived. In the second one Paule knows nothing of Madeleine's plans, inquires and asks if she might accompany Madeleine to the movies. Madeleine hesitates a bit in her speech before telling Paule that she will be going with her family. Paule responds by saying that she understands the situation and tells Madeleine that she will not have much fun because she will be going with her family.

Inasmuch as the Notional-Functional syllabus is based upon the use of the "real language," it may include, as in conversation, sentences that are not always complete. There are hesitations and in many cases, pronunciation may differ from the accepted standard. The ear must be attuned to these differences.

Thus, the new syllabus must be designed to incorporate different grammatical structures such as "j'y vais" and "t'amuser" but the student does not need to know actively, for example, that "y" is used an adverbial pronoun. Likewise, the knowledge of reflexive verbs does not need to be formally studied in order to wish someone a good time. In the early stages, a passive knowledge is sufficient for the student to make himself understood. Simon Belasco

addresses this topic by stating that to present forty or fifty grammatical points in one language course for active mastery is futile. He suggests concentrating on a limited number of features for active use and considering the other grammatical structures for passive acquisition.[7]

A Notional-Functional syllabus is designed so that passive knowledge becomes active knowledge by the cyclical ordering of the material. By recycling or reviewing the knowledge over and over again, the student has a chance to master it as it gradually becomes active knowledge. Grammar which has not been presented previously is considered a vocabulary item or a cluster. The student does not necessarily need to understand the linguistic structures of the language in order to use them effectively in speech. The teacher need not discuss or analyse structure if the students do not inquire.

In order to illustrate the recycling process, one could create a vocabulary item or cluster named PC (passé composé) which has five subcomponents (PC1, PC2, PC3, PC4, PC5). The following example demonstrates the recycling concept of the clusters to be actively mastered and those to be recognized passively.

	ACTIVE MASTERY	PASSIVE RECOGNITION
Cycle 1	PC1 (avoir as aux.)	PC2 (être as aux.)
Cycle 2	PC2 (être as aux.)	PC3 (reflexive verbs)
		PC4 (direct object pronouns)
Cycle 3	PC3 (reflexive verbs)	PC5 (sequence of direct and
	PC4 (direct object pronouns)	indirect object pronouns)

Each cycle serves to reinforce the previous cycles through the use of grammatical structures so the student will be able to integrate the passive knowledge slowly into the "active knowledge bank." Corder states that language learning is not just amassing material in the brain, but that it must be sifted in slowly in order for it to be integrated:

> In language, nothing is learned completely until everything is learned. If this is so then no simple linear sequence for a syllabus is appropriate. A logical solution to this problem might seem to be a cyclic, or spiral structure, which requires the learner to return time and time again to some aspect of language structure, language process, or domain of language use, in order to discover how it relates and is integrated with some different part of language. Foreign language is not just cumulative, it is an integrative process.[8]

Current methodologies inhibit the use of this integrative process explained by Corder. Valdman proposes a change in syllabus design which would reduce the number of formally studied grammatical structures and increase the use of authentic language in order to facilitate the learning

process.

2.2 Adopting a Notional-Functional Syllabus

Valdman and Warriner-Burke warn that simply implementing a communicative syllabus will not be sufficient to fulfill the objective of language proficiency.[9] A list of objectives for the syllabus must be defined and ways of achieving them must be included in the first step of adopting a Notional-Functional syllabus. This must be done before advocating the complete replacement of the traditional structural syllabus with the Notional-Functional syllabus. Valdman and Warriner-Burke add that there will be different objectives for different language courses taught. For example: What is the age of the learner and what is the anticipated length of the period of study? Are the educational goals immediate or long-term? Formal or "traditional" requirements may make it impracticable for communicative competence to be the only goal; but it can, nonetheless, be a major one for which to strive.

In order to assist curriculum specialists in the development and implementation of a foreign language program, the following objectives are proposed by Valdman and Warriner-Burke:

1. Appreciation of the humanistic values of learning a second language

2. Motivation to continue the study of a second language

3. Ability to understand spoken language samples occurring in a situational context, commensurate with the student's level of learning

4. Ability to speak and be understood on a level compatible with the student's level of learning

5. Ability to read without recourse to direct translation written text that is consonant with the learner's level of development

6. Ability to write sentences within the scope of the learner's experience, using authentic patterns of the taught language

7. Awareness and knowledge of the target language culture(s) in question

8. Insight into and experience in learning a language

In addition, Valdman and Warriner-Burke propose to modify the structural syllabus so that it would deliver communicative competence. They believe further that because of the lack of research combining communicative and linguistic or "grammatical" competence, it would be unwise to consider a Notional-Functional syllabus as the perfect answer to the question of oral proficiency. However, it would be advantageous to modify the situational/ structural syllabus by:

1. Giving semantic notions and modalities higher priorities than surface features in the selection and ordering of grammar

> 2. Providing more authentic samples of verbal interactions which illustrate how grammatical features are used to achieve particular communicative ends
>
> 3. Introducing features in the syllabus which distinguish spoken from written discourse
>
> 4. Setting target levels that fall considerably short of accurate and well formed target language norms and accepting the reduced and approximative nature of the discourse that characterizes classroom communicative interactions.[10]

Thus, if the teacher adjusts his expectations of performance and completeness and requires intensive (albeit less-than-perfect) use of the target language by the student, then oral proficiency has the potential to develop. Grammar becomes a means to an end, and not the end in itself.

2.3 Oral Proficiency as the Organizing Principle

Oral proficiency is becoming the organizing principle in the foreign language syllabus. The following illustrative dialogues present two different formats. The first one drills possessive adjectives (structural syllabus) while the second dialogue could be one from a Notional-Functional syllabus.

Marc - C'est ton stylo?

Anne - Oui, c'est mon stylo.

Marc - Alors, ce n'est pas le stylo de Jean?

Anne - Non, ce n'est pas son stylo.

Marc - C'est ta règle, ça?

Anne - Non, c'est la règle de Jeanne.

Marc - Ça aussi, c'est sa règle?

Anne - Oui, c'est aussi sa règle.

The purpose of the following dialogue is not to drill possessive adjectives but rather to locate a book.

Marc - Où est mon livre?

Anne - Quel livre?

Marc - Mon livre de français.

Anne - Je ne sais pas. Voici le mien. Prends-le.

Marc - Ce n'est pas ton livre. C'est le mien.

Anne - Es-tu sûr? Euh...oui, tu as raison. C'est bien ton livre. Je m'excuse.

Marc - Bien, mais...où est le tien?

Anne - Le voilà. Sur la table.

Grammar is secondary in a Notional-Functional syllabus. The needs of the students are of the utmost importance. The second dialogue above portrays the need to find a book and, in so doing, employs more difficult grammatical structures such as: interrogatives, verbs <u>être</u>, <u>savoir</u>, <u>avoir raison</u>, and reflexive verb <u>s'excuser</u>, possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns, direct object pronouns, negation, idiomatic use of "bien" to stress an idea, and the

preposition "sur." In comparison, the first dialogue presents only the verb être, negation, possessive adjectives and possession with the preposition "de." Through the use of a Notional-Functional syllabus, grammatical structures presented passively are actively integrated through the cyclical ordering of material. Before grammar is discussed, the student is exposed to the context in which one would use certain structures. The instruction of grammatical structures in the academic curriculum is addressed in Section 2.4.

Linda Harlow argues that the Notional-Functional approach is indeed a viable alternative to the structural syllabus as well as a way to fulfill the foreign language teacher's promise to develop oral proficiency:

> One of the greatest advantages of using the functional-notional approach is that we would come much closer to fulfilling the promises inherently made to students when they enroll in the course. "You will be so much better off for having studied a foreign language..." is the kind of promise we often make but fail to realize. With a functional-notional organization, students will learn to do the things promised and achieve personal satisfaction.[11]

Harlow adds that it would be unsettling at first for some teachers to handle the abrupt break from tradition by using a Notional-Functional syllabus, but in order to achieve the goal or promise of oral proficiency, we must have practice with purpose. For if practice has no purpose, the student will put linguistic structures into his "passive knowledge

bank" and there the structures will stay. Gail Guntermann has developed a list of communicative activities which should be covered every day in class.[12] She first selects expressions which the student will need to say immediately or most often such as greetings, leave-taking, asking for information, borrowing, lending, complaining, or asking what will be done in class. These are functions most often performed in class; they constitute basic classroom survival language. Grammar is certainly not forgotten but is practiced by using it in the different functions. For example, a student may not have a pencil so he learns how to say "I don't have." To ask a classmate for something he must learn how to say "Do you have?". From the first day the students are learning grammar but they are learning it because they have a purpose in mind, as the student who needs a pencil. He cannot get a pencil unless he asks for it in the target language. He is motivated to learn because his needs have to be fulfilled. Once a purpose has been identified, the rest of the components fall into place. Based on the fact that grammar is taught in context and in a communicative situation, it becomes part of the "active knowledge bank."

The concept of fulfilling students' needs has been previously addressed; but it would prove advantageous to ascertain what these needs might be. Harlow, Smith, and Garfinkel surveyed 250 Purdue University students enrolled

in their first semester of French.[13] They were asked what their perceived future uses of the French language would be. Below is the order in which they placed their preferences:

1. To travel to a French-speaking country
2. To understand French culture
3. To relate French to an understanding of own native tongue
4. To speak with French visitors in America
5. To correspond with French-speaking countries in an American job
6. To read French books and articles for research
7. To work in a French-speaking country
8. To study at a French-speaking university.

When asked about their perceived communication needs, the items the students seemed to want to do the most in the target language were: to meet and greet people, to express desire, to express pleasure, and to approve/disapprove. They also wanted to be able to ask for facts, to seek information, and to give permission. The items of least interest were: talking about the weather, expressing surprise, impatience, being able to blame, to threaten, to swear, and to refuse. The positive aspects of the language were perceived to be the most important ones. Students did not indicate a need to make hypotheses, to express indifference, or to express hope.

The needs expressed by the students in this survey can

not only serve as a guide to curriculum planners of a Notional-Functional syllabus; they are also useful to the teacher who would like to experiment with different aspects of a Notional-Functional syllabus.

2.4 The Role of Grammar

The question of grammar has surfaced numerous times during the course of this chapter. It is obvious that it cannot be overlooked nor forgotten altogether; its role must be identified and addressed in order for a language program to be balanced and well organized.

The discussions on current oral proficiency related topics have not centered, perhaps understandably so, on the role of grammar. It would appear that the study of grammar does play a role even though it is of secondary importance. When a Notional-Functional syllabus is used, self-expression and being understood are of primary importance.

The grammar included in a Notional-Functional syllabus is communicative in nature, as opposed to a structural syllabus in which the grammar is introduced according to linguistic theory. Mary Finocchiaro explains that a Notional-Functional syllabus uses a grammar which "takes cognizance of authentic real world speech as recorded from live, spontaneous speech acts."[14]

Grammar must be included in a language program because it plays an integral part in the whole process of meaningful

communication; but it is not to be the organizing principle of the Notional-Functional concept. This approach is characterized by the student's ability to use the real language in its context. In contrast, the structural syllabus places the main objective on the form of the sentence. In so doing, the meaning of the sentence is reduced to a simple, out-of-context, translation. Merrill Swain and Michael Canale suggest three reasons why meaning should take precedence over structure:

1.) As in first language acquisition, children focus more on being understood than on speaking grammatically correct sentences. Perhaps initially, second language learners might be afforded this luxury.

2.) Despite the fact that initially the child does not speak with grammatical correctness, he does eventually acquire the language. Swain and Canale assume that initially getting the meaning across does not preclude the attainment of grammatical competence.

3.) Language learning is more effective when the learner is involved instead of rehearsing grammatical structures. Active participation through communicative acts is believed to be more effective and to lead to faster language acquisition.[15]

Especially during the first year of study, students need to be motivated to speak the target language and to express their thoughts in context because they feel they do

not know enough of the language to express themselves. The formal instruction and testing of grammar should be in moderation but informally it should incorporate many tenses and parts of speech because these would be treated as vocabulary items. As the student progresses orally, the formal instruction of the grammar will be presented. The first-year student can produce numerous tenses and moods in his speech when the need arises. Either he asks the teacher for assistance during conversation or the teacher can present the tenses or moods in a sentence as vocabulary items. The following examples show how a student can use grammatical structures as vocabulary items without necessarily studying them formally.

Je voudrais aller chez moi. (conditional)
Je dois étudier ce soir. (modal)
Je veux parler français. (present + infinitive)
J'étais malade hier. (imperfect)
Je vais aller en ville demain. (near future)
Je suis allé(e) chez mon ami lundi. (past)
Je veux que tu sois chez moi à dix heures. (subjunctive)

In a grammatical syllabus, certain tenses would be studied formally during the first year and many conjugations would be memorized. In a Notional-Functional syllabus, all of the above tenses and moods might be introduced, but only certain ones would be formally studied during the first year. The students would be exposed to more material during a shorter period of time when the curriculum is based on a Notional-Functional syllabus than when it is based on a structural syllabus. With one mood a student would be able to perform

functions such as the following:

Direct: Finissez l'examen.

Request: Donnez-moi votre crayon, s'il vous plaît.

Advise: Essayez la jupe rouge.

Apologize: Excusez-moi.

Invite: Venez me voir demain.

The student can use the imperative for many purposes other than ordering someone to do something. In turn, he receives immediate feedback from his efforts and is pleased or displeased by what he has said. Swain and Canale suggest a means of incorporating an adequate amount of grammar into a functionally organized curriculum by:

1) making use of grammatical sequencing criteria, such as degree of complexity with respect to functions, in selecting the grammatical forms to be introduced in covering a given function. This material becomes a set of criteria.

2) creating from these sets of criteria subsets of grammatical sequencing criteria and, in turn, using these to determine functional sequencing.

3) making use of repetitions of grammatical forms in various functions throughout the syllabus.

4) devoting a certain amount of class time to the discussion of new or different grammatical points.[16]

Wilkins states that the grammatical syllabus does have its critics; perhaps this is due to a lack of motivational

characteristics directed towards the learner. Wilkins argues:

> The criticisms come from a number of different directions. It is very difficult for many learners to appreciate the applicability of the knowledge they gain through [a structural] approach. The process of being taken systematically through the grammatical system often reduces the motivation of those who need to see some immediate practical return for their learning.... The grammatical syllabus, it is argued, fails to provide the necessary conditions for the acquisition of communicative competence.[17]

Swain and Canale tend to agree with Wilkins' idea of motivation but modify his statement by stating that a communicative approach which is organized on a functional basis is more likely to have positive consequences for learner motivation than is a grammatically based communicative approach. They qualify the above statement by adding that their view does need to be empirically tested.[18] No communicative syllabus can guarantee motivation or oral proficiency; it is only a way to organize the material to be learned. The teacher must, as always, adapt the syllabus according to the students' needs.

The issue is not which syllabus is better, the Notional-Functional or the grammatical, but rather what foreign language educators can do in order to achieve an optimal balance between oral proficiency and grammar. The students' needs must be first recognized and then met. Students need oral as well as grammatical practice but above

all, they need to be motivated.

Teachers recognize the fact that if a student is motivated he will do well. If the student is able to use the real language in a natural situation he receives immediate feedback for his performance. The same holds true when grammar is being taught. Many times, students have convinced themselves that they are not able to understand grammar or that it is boring. For various reasons, this seems to be the case more often than not. If the student is placed in a situation where his optimism and his desire to learn replace his pessimism and fear, he subsequently learns.

2.5 The Role of the Computer

In order to be motivated, the student must be stimulated by: (1) a need; (2) immediate feedback; or (3) individualized instruction. Teachers deal with many different learning abilities and personalities daily. It is impossible for an individualized lesson to be prepared and taught to 150 students every day. Computer-assisted instruction can be of great assistance to all teachers. The incorporation of computers into classrooms could increase the amount of time a teacher spends in conversation while enabling students to practice and progress with grammatical structures at their own pace on vocabulary, verb conjugations, or reading.

Computers would offer students the ability to practice as much as necessary in order to master a skill. The challenge of technology is not to be viewed as an enemy but rather as a partner. Arguing against the premise that computers would turn the school into a video-game factory or that computers are enemies, Ernest L. Boyer states:

> Rather, the challenge is to build a partnership between traditional and nontraditional education, letting each do what it can do best. Technology has the potential to free teachers from the rigidity of the syllabus and tap the imaginations of both teachers and student to an extent that has never been possible before.[19]

Through the use of commercially available programs, teachers can incorporate virtually any grammatical structure into the lesson. An example of such a program is Word Attack.[20] Nouns, verbs and adjectives are all practiced on this program. There are four different areas which a student can study:

1. Word Display
2. Multiple Choice Quiz
3. Sentence Completion
4. Word Attack (game)

In "Word Display" 25 words are listed separately on the screen. Examples from a Notional-Functional syllabus are used below to illustrate the implementation of grammar with the assistance of the computer.

The notion is food and the function is in a specialty

shop (la charcuterie, la boulangerie, l'épicerie, etc.); the situation is that of buying food.

Word Display would present the vocabulary items in the target language and in English. The student would select from the list a category to practice:

Nouns: Food Items

Adjectives: Colors

Verbs: Acheter, vendre, vouloir, se trouver, désirer, etc.

After the student had studied and practiced the list he would take a multiple choice quiz concerning the vocabulary just studied. The words missed would be shown on the screen and could be printed out to be shown to the teacher. The teacher could then give an assignment based on the words missed.

The third part of the program would assist in sentence completion. A sentence is presented with a word missing. The meaning is printed at the top of the screen. For example, Je vais à _____ pour acheter du pain. "Bakery" would be above the sentence if the student needed help. The student types in "la boulangerie." In this exercise a student must not only select the correct word but also spell it correctly. Once again, a list of missed words is presented at the end in order to give him an opportunity to reinforce his learning.

The game feature of this program is called Word Attack. It is an arcade game but it reinforces learning in an

exciting and challenging manner. The student is timed and must "attack" the correct word within a given amount of time or lose points. For example, four words would appear on the screen: le pain, les carottes, le lait, les petits pois. The student must match the store (la boulangerie) with the correct food item, (le pain). The student would have to attack "le pain" to win his points. The pace is fast and the game provides much learning as well as entertainment. David Wyatt comments that computer-assisted instruction would constitute not only a considerable advance over traditional methodology but also a valuable instructional type of activity. A computer-assisted instructional program has the potential to motivate low achievers as well as to individualize programs for the more advanced student.[21]

Programs such as Word Attack illustrate the point that computers are a potential tool to assist not only the teacher by increasing the amount of time to be spent in conversation, but also the learner on an individual basis at his own pace and needs.

Other areas of computer-assistance include: practicing conjugations, proofreading paragraphs, reading short stories, or studying the long lists of vocabulary for the Advanced Placement test in levels four and five.

The following suggested means of integrating grammar into the Notional-Functional approach is based on a normal

class of thirty students. The class would be divided into halves: Group A and Group B. Group A would meet for conversation on Monday and Wednesday while Group B would work with the computers. (Five to eight computers would be a realistic number to use.) On Tuesday and Thursday, Group B would meet for conversation and Group A would work with the computers. On Fridays, the whole class would meet as a group. Possible activities could include putting on skits, with Group A as clerks in a store and Group B as the customers. Both groups would know the vocabulary as it would have been studied during the week. The teacher could also use this time to review grammar if necessary. There are infinite possibilities which would work with only a finite number of vocabulary expressions.

If the computer is viewed as technology complementing the teaching/learning process, it then has the potential to fulfill its purpose; it will never replace the teacher. David Wyatt writes:

> The computer has the potential to play an important role in the teaching and testing of the receptive skills. In the area of teaching, this role need not be limited to traditional tutorial and drill and practice activities, and a wide range of other possibilities should be considered. The area of testing also holds promise for computer-adaptive innovations in addition to the computerization of familiar types of test.[22]

2.6 Adapting the Foreign Language Textbook

Since most textbooks are based on a grammatical syllabus, Gail Guntermann and June K. Phillips have outlined in their book, Functional-Notional Concepts: Adapting the Foreign Language Textbook, the steps needed in order to adapt the traditional textbook to the Notional-Functional approach. Guntermann and Phillips have outlined four steps in the planning process of adapting the text to any course or level:

> 1. Select from the text materials the essential grammar and vocabulary that are to be emphasized in the intensive communication practice.
>
> 2. Select and sequence the meanings that are expressed through the forms chosen in Stage 1 (when there are multiple meanings).
>
> 3. Select and sequence the purpose for practice.
>
> 4. Apply appropriate activities to carry out the functions of Stage 3, using the grammar and vocabulary in Stage 1 to express meanings in Stage 2.[23]

In this chapter only the first three steps are described; the fourth step (Activities) is addressed in chapter three as it is linked with the writing of the syllabus.

Guntermann and Phillips consider the first step in adapting the textbook as the selection of grammar and vocabulary necessary to serve the students' needs. A student can function easily and productively, for example, by using the "est-ce que" form when asking a question.

There is no need to present other interrogative forms for asking questions during the first few weeks of class. The teacher could carry out questioning by the use of inversion which the student would understand but would not be ready to use in the early stages. During Cycle 2 the student would learn other ways of asking a question. This spiral or cyclic approach helps to reinforce what is learned.

Step 2 of Guntermann and Phillips' adaptation process incorporates the application of meanings into a situation once the most essential ones have been practiced and understood. Subsequently, more complex forms can be studied and integrated into the functions. This is the beginning of the spiral arrangement of the material. For example, in level one, the basic colors are learned, whereas in level two, the different shades such as navy blue or light blue might be learned. At the third level, plaids, stripes and other designs might be taught.

Selecting the functions to be practiced is the third step in the planning process. The teacher makes a decision as to which needs are to be met. Initially, the students need to be able to communicate in the classroom. In applying a Notional-Functional syllabus in this situation, the notion is Education and the function is in the classroom. The situation could be asking for supplies or describing the classroom. At level 2 within the same function, the vocabulary and grammar might be expanded to

include getting to know one's classmates or describing one's schedule. At a more advanced level, job interviews could be conducted. Students would be required to describe their educational history, where they had lived, hobbies, etc. The teacher could make a game out of such an activity by having teams select the most qualified "applicant" and the teams would then discuss their rationale in the target language. The above "game" is an example of Step 4 which includes different types of activities.[24]

Although adaptation of a book is not always feasible because of lack of time, expertise, resources, etc., adapting chapters from a currently used textbook to a Notional-Functional syllabus may be possible. The same theory is applied but only on a smaller scale. Currently, a few textbooks are based on a Notional-Functional approach such as Et Vous?[25] and Echanges[26] but most textbooks are organized from a structural point of view. Chapter five from French for Mastery I[27] has been selected to illustrate the adaptation process.

Any given chapter of French for Mastery I has a general topic or notion. The notion of chapter 5, for example, is food. Perhaps the teacher wants the students to be able to order food in a restaurant and to shop for food in specialized shops. The function would be in a restaurant and in the shops respectively. The situations would be ordering a meal and buying food. In order to realize these

functions, the teacher selects the necessary vocabulary and grammatical structures from the chapter. An active/passive vocabulary list might be created. The teacher could add to or delete from the list as necessary. For example, the vocabulary items such as lamb, wine, beer or champagne in this chapter may not be necessary in Cycle 1.

The second step is the application of meanings. The teacher might assign two vocabulary lists, one being active and the other passive. The student would be required to learn and use the active list and only recognize the passive list. Cycle two would present this material again so that the passive list would be incorporated into the active list.

The grammatical structures selected should be simple but necessary. The idioms avoir soif and avoir faim are necessary and would be placed on the active list. The student need not learn the entire conjugation of avoir to express his thirst or hunger. When speaking of food, the use of the verb prendre + the partitive would be taught. The passive list could include items such as faire la cuisine, avoir besoin de, or quelle sorte de. In the second cycle, students could use the structures actively in statements or in questions.

The function could be illustrated by the teacher through the use of sample sentences. The teacher might assign an activity like creating a dialogue about ordering food or perhaps students would have a list of items to buy.

In order to acquire all of the items of the list, students would have to visit each "store" set up in the classroom, ask for the respective item, and report to the teacher, in the target language, the items he had acquired. Such an exercise could also be used as a test or quiz.

After the student had a chance to use the language in the real situation, the formal teaching of the grammar would take place. As discussed in Section 2.5, the grammar could be practiced by the use of computers. This would allow the teacher to continue with Cycle 2 of the same notion or to discuss other elements of Chapter five such as telling time, inviting people to dinner, etc. Another option available would be to utilize the recipe at the end of the chapter in a demonstration exercise. The teacher could make crêpes in the Home Economics kitchen and give the demonstration in the target language.

The last element of a Notional-Functional syllabus is that of Culture. In chapter five of French for Mastery I there are cultural notes on champagne. These could be expanded by speaking about wine as an integral part of French meals. In addition, European table manners might be discussed and the students could even practice proper table manners in class.

The most important aspect to be remembered when adapting a textbook to a Notional-Functional syllabus is not the amount of material formally presented, but rather, the

needs of the students.

Another textbook which would fit nicely into the approach previously explained by Guntermann and Phillips is Echanges.[28] This textbook is designed for the first-year student on the college level. It is accompanied by a tape program and a laboratory manual.

The method used by Comeau and Lamoureux is based on communicative competence. Indeed, the first observation to be made is the total use of French throughout the textbook. Although it is not designed for high school students, it could be used despite the differences in maturity level.[29]

Each of the twenty-three chapters is divided into nine sub-units: scènes à jouer, exercices oraux, prononciation, exercices écrits, coin culturel, lecture, description/ composition, vocabulaire utile, and explications. A few are discussed below.

The "scènes à jouer" are small dialogues which are used to introduce the vocabulary and grammar. The unique feature of these dialogues is that they are very well written and the student could actually use the lines in conversation.

The "exercices oraux" are effective because once again, real language is utilized in different situations. The oral exercises allow for expansion and reinforcement of the vocabulary and grammar already presented at the beginning of the chapter. For example, Notion = Food. In order to find out student preferences for food and drink, students use the

verbs manger, aimer, boire:

Aimez-vous le vin?

Buvez-vous du vin français?

Les Français aiment-ils le vin?

Les étudiants aiment-ils la bière?

Aimez-vous les jus de fruit?

Mangez-tu du pain?[30]

Grammar still plays a role in the teaching of a foreign language but it has become secondary in the Notional-Functional syllabus. The exercices écrits are not as extensive as the oral sections because the textbook is based on the development of oral proficiency.

The "coin culturel" serves two purposes: to teach culture and reading. These sections are somewhat difficult for this level but, in any case, the student is exposed to the French way of life. In the sixth chapter, the notion is food so the cultural element is that of "Le Café". The student learns that it is a cultural, social, as well as an intellectual institution.

The sub-unit of "description/composition" utilizes the extensive vocabulary listed. It allows for discussion or the creation of dialogues using the real language for a real situation. For example, an American tourist enters a French café; unaware of French culture, he orders an American breakfast. The waiter is surprised. The student is to imagine the dialogue which might take place.

The following section is "vocabulaire utile;" it is divided into categories of the different parts of speech and idioms. Some of the vocabulary is shown in pictures and for those who need and want more vocabulary, extensive lists are provided for even the most advanced learners. The extensive vocabulary section in Echanges would even be of use during the second year of French. The authors use idiomatic expressions like faire la grasse matinée, être au régime, faire sa toilette which allow the student to manipulate the language in accordance with his needs.

The last category in each chapter is "explication." This is a summary of all of the grammar presented in the chapter. It gives brief explanations in French with numerous examples. The fact that the grammar is placed at the end of the chapter implies that the authors believe grammar is important but should not dominate the learning process.

If the method of teaching to be used is based on oral proficiency, this is an excellent textbook. If grammar is the major thrust, then this is not the book to be selected. This text is also a good reference book because it offers useful vocabulary in a categorized format. It provides many interesting cultural facts and suggests many good ideas for the teacher using a Notional-Functional approach. For example, a student learns such facts as the percentage of American films shown in France or the fact that the café is

the "second family" for many and that it plays a big role in a French student's life. The reason there has been an increase in the use of mineral water is traced to the problem of polluted water and the interest the French hold concerning their health.

Echanges also has many good ideas to promote oral proficiency such as those listed in the Discussion/ Composition section. For example:

1. Describe any interesting person, actor, writer, singer, and have the class identify him.[31]

2. Write a dialogue between a difficult customer who wants to buy a dress but cannot be pleased and a nice saleslady. Finally, the saleslady tells the customer that she is an idiot and impossible, etc.[32]

2.7 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has presented current literature on oral proficiency, grammar as an integral part of the Notional-Functional concept, and ways in which a current textbook can be adapted for integration into an oral proficiency curriculum. It will take much coordination, demonstration and practice for this concept to materialize. What does the future show? ACTFL will analyze its Provisional Proficiency Guidelines and is beginning to develop curriculum and materials outlining testing procedures. ACTFL is also exploring the possibility of

altering teaching training and certification requirements.

Language proficiency does not automatically happen. It takes much planning and development on the part of language specialists and must be promoted through the use of research and demonstrations. Since functional proficiency has only begun as the organizing principle of the language curriculum, considerable work lies ahead to develop the materials and to train the teachers. All of the above criteria must be given careful and special attention in order for the Notional-Functional approach to be incorporated effectively into the oral-proficiency-oriented foreign language classroom.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

[1]Theodore V. Higgs and Ray Clifford, "The Push Toward Communication," in Curriculum, Competence, and the Foreign Language Teacher, ed. Theodore V. Higgs (Lincolnwood, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1982), pp. 60-61, as cited by Judith E. Liskin-Gasparro, "The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines: A Historical Perspective," in Teaching for Proficiency, the Organizing Principle, ed. Theodore V. Higgs (Lincolnwood, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1984), p.37.

[2]Because this thesis primarily addresses the teaching of oral proficiency, only the ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines are listed in the Appendix. The guidelines for listening, reading, writing and culture are not presented.

[3]For more information concerning oral proficiency testing, see Judith E. Liskin-Gasparro, "The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines: Gateway to Testing and Curriculum," Foreign Language Annals, 17 (1984), pp. 475-489; see also Isabelle M. Kaplan and Margaret Sinclair, "Oral Proficiency Testing and the Language Curriculum: Two Experiments in Curricular Design for Conversation Courses," Foreign Language Annals, 17 (1984), pp. 491-497.

[4]Albert Valdman, "Communicative Use of Language and Syllabus Design," Foreign Language Annals, 11 (1978), pp.

567-578.

[5]Valdman, p. 568.

[6]Wilga Rivers, A Practical Guide to the Teaching of French (New York, London, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 22.

[7]Simon Belasco, "The Relation of Linguistic Analysis to Foreign Language Teaching," in Current Issues in the Teaching of French, ed. G. Todd (Philadelphia: Center for Curriculum Development, 1972), p. 24.

[8]S. Pit Corder, Introducing Applied Linguistics (Harmondsworth, Great Britain: Penguin, 1973), p. 297.

[9]Albert Valdman and Helen Warriner-Burke, "Major Surgery Due: Redesigning the Syllabus and Texts," Foreign Language Annals, 13 (1980), pp. 261-270.

[10]Valdman and Warriner-Burke, p. 268.

[11]Linda Harlow, "An Alternative to Structurally Oriented Textbooks," Foreign Language Annals, 11 (1978), p. 562.

[12]Gail Guntermann, "Purposeful Communication Practice: Developing Functional Proficiency in a Foreign Language," Foreign Language Annals, 12 (1979), pp. 219-225.

[13]Linda Harlow, W. Flint Smith, and Alan Garfinkel, "Student Perceived Communication Needs: Infrastructure of the Functional-Notional Syllabus," Foreign Language Annals, 13 (1980), pp. 11-22.

[14]Mary Finocchiaro and Christopher Brumfit, The

Functional-Notional Approach from Theory to Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 124.

[15]Merrill Swain and Michael Canale, "The Role of Grammar in a Communicative Approach to Second Language Teaching and Testing," ERIC ED 221 026 (July 1979), p. 40.

[16]Swain and Canale, p. 43.

[17]D.A. Wilkins, Grammatical, Situational, and Notional Syllabuses, ERIC ED 136 549 (August 1972), p. 3.

[18]Swain and Canale, p. 43.

[19]Ernest L. Boyer, "Education's New Challenge," Personal Computing, 8 (September 1984), pp. 81-85.

[20]Janice G. Davidson and Richard K. Eckert, Jr, Word Attack (Ranchos Palos Verdes, Cal.: Davidson and Associates, 1983).

[21]David H. Wyatt, "Computer-Assisted Teaching and Testing of Reading and Listening," Foreign Language Annals, 17 (1984), pp. 393-407.

[22]Wyatt, p. 393.

[23]Gail Guntermann and June K. Phillips, Functional-Notional Concepts: Adapting the Foreign Language Textbook (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982), p. 12.

[24]Stage 4 is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

[25]Gilbert A. Jarvis, Thérèse M. Bonin, and Diane W. Birckbichler, Et Vous? (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1983).

[26]Raymond F. Comeau and Normand J. Lamoureux, Echanges

(New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1982).

[27]Jean-Paul Valette and Rebecca M. Valette, French For Mastery I (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1975).

[28]Comeau and Lamoureux, 1982.

[29]The textbook designed for high school use is entitled Et Vous?; see note 25.

[30]Comeau and Lamoureux, Chapter 6.

[31]Comeau and Lamoureux, Chapter 2.

[32]Comeau and Lamoureux, Chapter 10.

CHAPTER THREE

A NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUS: ITS CREATION AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

This chapter addresses not only the creation of a Notional-Functional syllabus but also the many activities which could be used in order to implement the syllabus. The manner in which the material should be ordered is discussed with the aid of a sample syllabus. Activities concerning the integration of grammatical structures are included as well as a discussion of my personal classroom experience.

3.1 CREATING A NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUS

The decisions to be made when creating a notional syllabus are: 1. What should be included? 2. How should the material be selected and sequenced? Wilkins states that the essence of a notional syllabus is its priority to the semantic content of language.[1] The aim of a notional syllabus is to facilitate the students' learning to express themselves in the categories of agreeing, disagreeing, complimenting, advising, etc. Wilkins goes on to say that

the first step in designing the syllabus is predicting what types of meaning the learners will need to communicate within their desired objectives. The teacher must take into consideration the age of the learner and his needs. Second, he must consider how the material should be presented most effectively and which language activities (speaking, listening, reading, or writing) are to be involved in each situation. After the objectives have been identified, the decision to be made is which linguistic forms are to be taught in accordance with each level. The remaining steps are left to the teacher. He can best organize the materials and activities according to the needs of his students. Wilkins outlines three problems of material selection which must be addressed by any syllabus designer:

1. Isolation vs. integration
2. Continuity and coherence
3. Grammar and conceptual categories[2]

The syllabus designer must first understand, then, that the material must not be isolated into bits and pieces. It must be cohesively constructed so as to reflect continuity. Wilkins maintains that sentences are practiced not just as illustrations of the grammar but as potential utterances with a clear social function. Also, the sentences inevitably express several different kinds of conceptual, modal, and functional meaning. Wilkins writes that it should be the syllabus designer who resolves this difficulty and not the materials producer. Wilkins believes that the

problem of isolation vs. integration is most easily overcome when people have clearly defined objectives. If, indeed, a linguistic item needs to be isolated for comprehension purposes during the course of activities, so be it. But a Notional-Functional syllabus cannot be effective if based on a potpourri of linguistic forms. The goal is to fulfill the learner's future language needs. For example, the language training program of IBM Paris identifies specific types of language performance which each job trainee would be called upon to perform during the course of his job.[3] A trainee would have to be able to deal with information in the following areas: gathering, giving, presenting, reporting or transferring. Writing, socializing and planning/deciding in the target language would also be focused upon during the course of study. Teachers could incorporate this type of teaching into their program. The gathering of information encompasses many skills and it is a good activity to utilize when oral proficiency is the organizing factor. Interviews, phone calls, and asking questions could all be integrated into practicing this activity. By using the Notional-Functional syllabus, not only speaking and listening skills are meshed but also those of reading and writing as well. Wilkins explains:

> The information sought may be a set of technical instructions, information relevant to a management task, information necessary for day-to-day living in the foreign country environment, the nature of customers'

> needs and so on. In such a language teaching situation one does not need to look beyond the work tasks that involve use of the foreign language to find an organizing principle for a notional syllabus.[4]

Socializing and making arrangements are the other categories included in the IBM program. Trainees would have to know how to deal with invitations (accepting, declining, asking); the other functions include being able to introduce, compliment, etc. Being able to make arrangements could incorporate such functions as suggesting, agreeing/disagreeing, expressing certainty/uncertainty, doubt, preferences, and alternatives. Thus, under the broad category of making arrangements there are many functions which can be practiced. No one could ever practice all of the situations in which he would potentially find himself, but as Wilkins states:

> We can therefore aim to create on the one hand a knowledge of the way in which the linguistic code is used to express these different notions and on the other hand a dexterity in applying this knowledge to differing circumstances so that the learner will readily be able to adapt himself to the demands of real communication when they arise in the future.[5]

The second problem a syllabus designer must address is that of continuity and coherence. Wilkins proposes two ways to alleviate the fragmentary characteristic of many units. His first proposal is to sequence the grammatical content in such a way that any new language item can be presented by

means of the forms that have previously been learned. He also mentions that this sort of presentation would be more effective because the learner could understand the continuity better. The second means by which Wilkins proposes to promote coherence in syllabus design is to simply introduce some sort of story line to ensure thematic continuity. He cautions that if the course is short-term, continuity is not as important. It is with the long-term courses, where motivation is a major factor in learning, where the continuity factor is necessary.

The third problem of syllabus design concerns grammar and conceptual categories. Wilkins states that this is a difficult issue to resolve. He recognizes the need to retain grammar in the total language program but he comments that he does not have the answer as to how this should be done:

> Consequently we cannot yet be sure that if we abandon the grammatical motivation which is behind most current course design, we shall still be able to ensure that the grammatical system of the language is adequately learned (as it must be if a learner is to become communicatively competent in the language). The question of how the learning of the grammar of a language can be effectively promoted within a notional syllabus remains to be answered therefore.[6]

It may well be, however, that the question of grammar will be easier to solve than that of testing oral proficiency. McKay suggests a form which cannot only be

used as a testing device but also as a learning device. A social context is presented to the students, who must then select the most appropriate form to use according to the situation. The following situations could be used in dealing with requests:

Directions: Choose the best answer.

1. Tom and Mary are students in the same class. Tom wants to borrow Mary's pen. He says:
a. Will you lend me a pen?
b. May I ask to borrow your pen?
c. Would you be so kind as to lend me your pen?

2. You're waiting at a bus stop. You notice the woman sitting next to you has a watch. You say:
a. I want to know the time.
b. You would do me a great service by giving me the time.
c. Could you give me the time please?

3. Joel is writing a letter to the Dean requesting a letter of recommendation.
a. I want a letter of recommendation.
b. Could you write a letter of recommendation?
c. I would appreciate your writing a letter of recommendation.

4. Maria is eating dinner with her family. She wants her younger brother to pass her the butter. She says:
a. Would you mind very much passing the butter?
b. Pass the butter.
c. Be so good as to pass the butter.[7]

Examples such as the above could be the basis for the developing of dialogues in different social situations so as to expose the students to different levels of requests.

3.2 COMMUNICATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Guntermann and Phillips address the question of how to apply communicative learning activities to the classroom by proposing nine categories of activities in their book Functional-Notional Concepts: Adapting the Foreign Language Textbook. The following is a description of each category constituting step four referred to by Guntermann and Phillips as the communicative stage.[8]

1) CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Students should be taught "classroom survival language" from the first day of class such as greetings, asking permission, oral or written instructions, lending or borrowing items, asking for help, etc. Students could be rewarded for their efforts as a motivational technique.

2) OUT OF CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Students are asked to carry out particular activities with native or near-native speakers outside of the classroom. Topics of conversation might include a small interview, gathering information or the celebrating of holidays. An invitation could be extended for the interviewed person to visit the class.

3) COMMUNICATION WITH INVITED GUESTS

Previous to a guest's visit, students could prepare questions which they would like to ask the guest. After the visit, short articles could be written and exchanged with other schools.

4) COMMUNICATION ABOUT STUDENTS' LIVES OUTSIDE OF CLASS

These activities easily encompass all four language skills. Selected topics might be questions about the family, date of birth, preferences of television shows, etc.

5) COMMUNICATION ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS/TOPICS OF MUTUAL INTEREST

This category differs from categories 1-4 because of its increased abstraction of topics. Some functions which lend themselves nicely to this area are reporting and discussing current events, discussing values, expressing opinions, and making predictions.

6) TRANSLOCATION

In this activity, students are required to perform a function which would take place outside of the classroom. For example, a student is an exchange student in Argentina. The local Rotary Club has invited the student to talk about his home state and city. The student presents his speech to the "Rotary Club."

7) ROLE-PLAYING

The student pretends that he is someone else. These activities are frequently effective with shy, yet creative, learners. For example, students could pretend they were faculty members in a meeting discussing ways to improve the school.

8) MAKE-BELIEVE

Any role-playing situation beyond the humanly plausible

is found in this category. For example, students could pretend to be animals in fables and state their feelings or opinions in situations such as the tortoise and the hare, the mouse and the lion, or the fox and the crow. These activities can be entertaining as well as stimulating but many teachers and students may not feel comfortable using this activity in the language program.

9) GAMES

Many of the activities previously discussed are games but the challenge of competition often adds a motivational factor to any learning activity. Students may tend to lose sight of the communicative purpose as they concentrate on winning; in turn, teachers may have to devise rules to reward students who play the game correctly.

A game discussed by Sandra J. Savignon in her book, Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice, is called "Why, you're my wife!" ("Mais vous êtes ma femme!" in the original version).[9] The game allows the teacher to be a player with the students while they engage in authentic language. The students try to use the target language by describing, explaining or simply discussing the characteristics of the person with whom they are speaking.

> To play, each player is given a card showing his or her identity (age, nationality, profession, etc.) along with the identity of a family member for whom he or she is looking. Players move about the room asking questions of anyone they choose in the search for their missing relatives. They must also, of course,

> answer questions put to them. When the answers a player receives correspond to the identity of the person for whom he or she is searching, the player exclaims, "Why, you're my wife!" or father, or sister, or grandfather, as the case may be. These two players then team up to look for a third member of the family, a fourth member, and so on until the whole family is reunited.
>
> There is much noise and moving about as players become alternately frustrated and encouraged in their searches. But it all happens in the L2 and without the slightest prodding from the teacher, who can either remain on the sidelines and serve as coach or take a card and join the melee. As a follow-up to the game itself, participants often enjoy getting acquainted with the other members of their family, improvising dialogue about their lives, what they have been doing since they were last together, etc., and then introducing their newly found families to the other members of the class. The game is played in a spirit of unabashed fun, and the results are often hilarious.[10]

These activities, which address the goal of oral proficiency, may be complemented by others whose purpose is to emphasize grammatical structures in the context of a Notional-Functional syllabus. The following section suggests such activities.

3.3 ACTIVITIES FOR GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE INTEGRATION[11]

1) Grammar point: present tense, regular or irregular verbs
   Meaning: Habituality
   Skills/ Functions/ Activities:

   A. Listening/ Learning about other ways of life/ Communication on topics of interest

Students listen to accounts of typical days in the lives of people in the target culture (e.g., a teenager, a businessman, a housewife, teacher) via a movie documentary, filmstrip-slide presentation, or the teacher's voice. They then view the series again, attempt to re-narrate the activities themselves in the third person by speaking or writing, and discuss the style and the forms used by those particular teenagers as compared with those of other ages and sex.

B. Speaking/ Exchanging personal information/ Communication about students' lives

Students make a list of questions they would like to ask others in the class about their daily lives. In groups of three, they pose their questions. They may be given feedback about the appropriateness of their questions within the target culture.

2) Grammar point: Near future (going to + verb; aller + infinitive; ir a + infinitive)
Meaning: Future actions and events
Skills/ Functions/ Activities:

A. Listening/ Taking telephone messages/ Translocation

Students are given a "telephone call" in which the speaker leaves a message about his or her activities or whereabouts for the next few hours. (A child caller tells a mother several things that he will do, with her permission, after school; a father calls home to say he will be late, to describe what he will be doing, and to make some promises; a school friend calls to split up a class assignment.) Students take brief notes and then pretend to pass the information on to the intended person.

B. Speaking/ Solving problems while traveling/ Translocation

Students pretend to travel to a country where the foreign language is spoken. As they "tour," they are given problems to solve. (For example: You are invited to ...; are you going to accept? You are lost; what are you going to do? They solve the problem by stating what they are going to do in each case.) They may be given feedback on the possible results of their solutions.

3) Grammar Point: Simple past (passé composé, preterit) versus imperfect
Meaning: Past action or event initiated or completed versus past continuous or habitual action or event
Skills/ Functions/ Activities:

A. Listening/ Speaking/ Evaluating the truthfulness of accounts/ Role playing
Students pretend to be a jury hearing a criminal case. The situation is explained to them, and they listen to the testimony of several witnesses. At the end of the "trial," they try to come to an agreement about the guilt or innocence of the suspect.

3.4 SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Up to this point, the designing of the syllabus has been discussed as well as the application of activities in the classroom. The remainder of this chapter presents examples from a model syllabus as well as an analysis of the seven categories which were listed in the first chapter: 1) Notion, 2) Function, 3) Situation, 4) Sample Sentences, 5) Grammatical Structures, 6) Vocabulary/Idioms, 7) Culture.

The sample syllabus is organized as follows:

A.1. Notion: Self (Level 1)

2. Notion: Family (Level 1)

B.1. Notion: Self & Family (Level 2)

2. Notion: Self & Family (Level 3)

C.1. Notion: Food (Level 1)

2. Notion: Food (Level 2)

3. Notion: Food (Level 3)

The first notion to be discussed is that of Self. This was briefly mentioned in chapter one but a full explanation follows:

A.1. NOTION: SELF (LEVEL ONE)

FUNCTION: F.1. Introductions and Greetings
F.2. Description of Self

SITUATIONS: S.1. Meeting a new classmate
S.2. Introducing a friend
S.3. Describing oneself and one's friends
S.4. Telling one's Zodiac sign and birthday

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

FUNCTION: Introductions/Greetings
S.1. Je m'appelle_____.
Comment t'appelles-tu?
Comment vous appelez-vous?
Comment vas-tu?

S.2. Je voudrais vous présenter à _____.
Je suis enchanté(e) de faire votre connaissance.
Qui est-ce?
C'est Paul.
C'est un ami.

FUNCTION: Describing oneself/friends
S.3. Je suis assez grand(e) et blond(e).
Il est embêtant mais assez intelligent.
Comment sont-ils?
Comment est-elle?
Quel âge as-tu?
J'ai quatorze ans.

S.4. Quel est ton signe du zodiaque?
Je suis Taureau.
Mon signe est Lion, et toi?
Quelle est la date de ton anniversaire?
C'est le vingt-cinq juillet.

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES:
Interrogatives
Present tense of s'appeler
Subject pronouns
Disjunctive (stressed) pronouns
Conjugation of -er verbs
Conditional of vouloir
Indirect objects
Present tense of être
Adjective agreement
Present tense of avoir
Avoir used with age
Dates
Possessive adjectives

VOCABULARY/IDIOMS:
Greetings/ Leave takings:
Salut, bonjour, Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle, bonsoir, au revoir, à bientôt, à demain, ça va? pas mal, ça ne va pas, très bien, comme ci comme ça, et toi?/et vous?, oui/non, je suis enchanté(e), je voudrais vous présenter à...,
Verbs:
parler, habiter, s'appeler, être, avoir, vouloir
Zodiac signs:
Capricorne, Verseau, Poissons, Bélier, Taureau, Gémeaux, Cancer, Lion, Vierge, Balance, Scorpion, Sagittaire
Animals:
le chien, le chat, le lapin, l'oiseau, la vache, l'ours, etc.
Adjectives:
grand, petit, jeune, joli, laid, paresseux, heureux, triste, américain(e), français, allemand, espagnol, noir, brun, roux, rousse, sympathique, embêtant, drôle, avare, généreux
Numbers:
1-31

CULTURE:
Titles (Bonjour, Madame)
Shaking hands
French greeting (cheek to cheek kissing)
Formal/ Informal address (vous/tu)
French family name (les Thibault = the Thibaults)

A.2. NOTION: Family (LEVEL ONE)

FUNCTION: F.1. Describing relationships
F.2. Describing family celebrations

SITUATION: S.1. Description of family members
S.2. Birthdays, weddings, holidays

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

FUNCTION: Describing family relationships
S.1. Mon père est beau./ Ma mère est belle.
Mon frère est sympatique.

FUNCTION: Describing family celebrations
S.2. Mon frère va se marier avec ma meilleure amie.
Mon anniversaire est le premier mars.
Je vais avoir quinze ans.
On va célébrer l'anniversaire de ma soeur aujourd'hui en huit.

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES
Possessive/descriptive adjectives
Near future tense
Reflexive verbs
Irregular adjectives: bon/bonne, beau/belle/bel

VOCABULARY/IDIOMS:
Verbs:
être, aller, se marier, avoir...ans, célébrer
Family members:
la mère, la soeur, le frère, etc.
Numbers:
32-100
Miscellaneous:
le(s) cadeau(x)
la lune de miel
Noël, Pâques
Bon anniversaire!
Joyeux Noël!
Félicitations!

CULTURE:
Family as a tightly-knit group
Civil and/or religious ceremonies
"Le sabot" at Christmas
La Fête des Rois (le 6 janvier)
"Les étrennes" on New Year's Day

B.1. NOTION: Self/Family (LEVEL TWO)

FUNCTION: F.1. Meeting someone new
F.2. Describing yourself and your family

SITUATION: S.1. At a party
S.2. With an exchange student

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

FUNCTION: Meeting someone new
S.1. Je voudrais vous présenter à ___.
J'aimerais vous présenter à ____.
Permettez-moi de vous présenter à_____.
(Name), Je vous présente à _____.
Enchanté(e)
Enchanté(e) de faire votre connaissance
Tout va bien?
Quoi de neuf?
Ça marche?, Ça boume?
Qu'est-ce qui ne va pas?
Qu'est-ce qu'il y a ?
Qu'avez-vous?
Pas grand-chose
Je suis mort(e) de fatigue!
Je suis fatigué!
Je ne suis pas en forme.
Je file (fam.)

FUNCTION: Describing self/family
S.2. Mon père est professeur.
Ma mère est avocate.
Ma soeur étudie à l'université.
Mon frère cadet aime jouer de la guitare.

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES:
Adverbs/Adverbial phrases:
Interrogatives: quand? où?, comment?, pourquoi?
Quantity: beaucoup, trop, très, combien, peu
Manner: bien, mal
Negative: ne...pas (ne...jamais, etc)
Time: souvent, quelquefois, toujours
Place: ici, là, là-bas, partout
Question formations:
A quelle heure?
Pourquoi est-ce que...?
Tenses:
Present
Passé composé
Future
Conditional

VOCABULARY/IDIOMS:
Occupations:
l'avocat, le médecin, ...
Verbs: vouloir, aimer, permettre, présenter, aller, marcher, avoir, marcher, être, jouer de/jouer à.
CULTURE:
Formalities: Bonjour, Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle.

B.2. NOTION: SELF/FAMILY (LEVEL THREE)

FUNCTION: F.1. Being interviewed
F.2. Describing past experiences

SITUATION: S.1. Job application
S.2. Former residences

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

FUNCTION: Being interviewed
S.1. Décrivez-vous.
Pourquoi voulez-vous travailler pour nous?
C'est entendu, je cherche un emploi.
Parlez-moi de vos experiences.
Je travaillais Chez André il y a deux ans.
Quelles sont vos qualifications?
Il y avait deux ans que j'habitais Paris quand j'ai décidé de travailler dans un restaurant.
On y parle français.
Je voudrais me mettre en apprentissage dans votre établissement.

FUNCTION: Describing past experiences
S.2. Où avez-vous habité?
D'abord, j'ai habité en Normandie et puis ma famille a déménagé en Bretagne.
Mon père s'est marié avec ma belle-mère pendant que j'étais en apprentissage Chez Claude.
Si j'avais eu de l'argent je serais allé en France.

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES:
All active voice tenses/moods
Prepositions: dans, en
Passive voice: "on"
Reflexive verbs in past tense
Possessive adjectives
Commands
Interrogatives

VOCABULARY/IDIOMS:
Le passe-temps préféré, les préférés
chercher
les travaux du passé
l'enseignement
se parler
le salaire
les voyages
décrire
l'emploi
expliquer
vouloir
c'est entendu
il y a (ago)
l'apprentissage/ l'apprenti/ se mettre en apprentissage
habiter/ déménager
d'abord/ puis
les provinces
le beau-père/la belle-mère/le beau-frère/la belle-soeur

CULTURE:
Apprenticeship programs as an integral part of professions
Geography

C.1. NOTION: Food (LEVEL ONE)

FUNCTION: F.1. In a grocery store
F.2. In a restaurant

SITUATION: S.1. Buying groceries
S.2. Ordering a meal

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

FUNCTION: In a grocery store
S.1. Combien coûtent les haricots verts?
Est-ce qu'il y a des aubergines?
Où se trouvent les raisins secs?

FUNCTION: In a restaurant
S.2. Moi, je prends des escargots.
Garçon/Serveuse, l'addition s'il vous plaît.
Voulez-vous quelque chose à boire?

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES:
Interrogative expressions: combien?, où?, quel?
Inversion of verbs for question formation
Partitive used with foods: du vin, du poulet
Definite article used in general sense

Commands
Direct object pronouns (le, la, les)

VOCABULARY/IDIOMS
Verbs:
coûter, se trouver, prendre, plaire, boire, vouloir
Food:
les légumes, les petits pois , le pain, le beurre, le lait, la viande
Speciality shops:
la pâtisserie, la charcuterie, la boulangerie, la crémerie, l'épicerie
Restaurant/Menu items:
l'addition
le garçon, le serveur, la serveuse
la carte
la boisson
le coq au vin, le bifteck, l'escalope de veau, la bouillabaisse, la mousse au chocolat, les fraises

CULTURE:
Buying food daily, French bread as an integral part of life,
Three different prices in a café
Salad eaten after main course
Cheese, fruit for dessert, coffee after meal
wine with meal,
Table manners

C.2. NOTION: FOOD (LEVEL TWO)

FUNCTION: F.1. In a restaurant
F.2. In a kitchen

SITUATION: S.1. Ordering a meal
S.2. Preparing soupe à l'oignon gratinée

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

FUNCTION: In a restaurant
S.1. Qu'est-ce que vous prenez?
Je prends un peu de riz avec le poulet.
Voulez-vous quelque chose à boire?
Apportez-moi une bouteille d'eau minérale.
Apportez-la-moi.
Et comme dessert voulez-vous du gâteau?
Oui, j'en prends.
Celui-ci ou celui-là?
Je prends celui-là.
Allons-y.

FUNCTION: In a kitchen
S.2. Coupez les oignons
Tranchez la baguette.
Versez de l'eau dans un pot.
Fondez le fromage.

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES
Masculine adjectives ending in "al" with plural in "aux"
Adverbs and nouns of quantity with "de":
beaucoup de, une tasse de, un peu de, trop de, assez de, combien de, une bouteille de, un verre de, un morceau de.
Commands: with indirect object pronouns
Pronouns:
reflexive, indirect object,
disjunctive, interrogative, demonstrative
Order of double objects

VOCABULARY/IDIOMS:
Restaurant items:
la carte, le menu,
la soupe du jour
la caisse, l'addition, le pourboire y compris
les plats principaux
le dessert
Verbs:
prendre, couper, trancher, verser, chauffer, sauter, fondre
Food:
les hors-d'oeuvre variés, les crudités, les escargots,
le poulet rôti, le coq au vin , le veau Marengo,
le flan, les glaces, les tartes, les gâteaux, comme dessert

CULTURE:
French eating customs

C.3. NOTION: Food (LEVEL THREE)

FUNCTION: F.1. At the table
F.2. In specialty shops

SITUATION: S.1. Eating dinner at home
S.2. Buying provisions

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

FUNCTION: At the table

S.1. Qu'est-ce que tu as préparé?
J'ai trouvé une nouvelle recette pour la blanquette de veau.
D'habitude es-tu gourmand ou gourmet?
Après avoir dîné, les enfants ont débarassé la table.
Après l'avoir fait, nous nous sommes couchés.

FUNCTION: In specialty shops

S.2. Je n'ai rien acheté au marchand de fruits, mais attends, je voudrais te montrer ce que j'ai trouvé à la boulangerie.
Pour le pique-nique, on doit acheter du vin.
Aussi il faut avoir un panier et des serviettes.
Maman veut que tu sois à l'heure, alors dépêche-toi.
N'oublie pas qu'on doit acheter du fromage à la fromagerie.

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES:

Passé Composé
Interrogatives
Adjective agreement
Use of the past infinitive (après avoir/être + past participle)
Reflexive verbs in passé composé
Use of negatives (ne...rien)
Commands (affirmative and negative)
Conditional tense
Relative pronouns
Indirect object pronouns
Pronoun "on"
Devoir + infinitive
Subjunctive mood
Use of the partitive

VOCABULARY/IDIOMS:

Verbs:
préparer, goûter, débarasser la table, se coucher, acheter/vendre

People:
le chef, le gourmand, le gourmet, le marchand de fruits, le cuisinier, la cuisinière

Food:
l'ingrédient, le plat, les hors-d'oeuvre, l'entrée, le plat de résistance (le plat principal), le mouton, le veau, le poulet, les provisions

Misc.:
la recette, à table, bon appétit, l'épice, le goût, le cassoulet, les restes, un panier

Speciality shops:
la boulangerie, la crémerie, la pâtisserie, la fromagerie, la boucherie, la confiserie, la charcuterie, l'épicerie

CULTURE:
Table manners in France, Regional dishes, Wine and bread as an integral part of a French meal.

3.5 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF A NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

As shown in the three levels of the above syllabus, the learning process goes through a cycle. There is review but along with the review is an additional list of finer points to be incorporated into the passive knowledge. In so doing, the next cycle will transform the passive knowledge into the "active knowledge bank" discussed in chapter two. The cyclic characteristic is what gives the Notional-Functional approach its attractiveness and diversity.

The major strengths of the Notional-Functional approach are not only that the material is recycled, but also that each level recycles the material into finer and more difficult discourse. The Notional-Functional concept can be applied to any method. It must be kept in mind that the use of the Notional-Functional syllabus is only an approach to teaching language; it is not a method. The specific method is left to the teacher. That leads to another benefit of the concept; the teacher is free to teach and experiment as

he so desires. He may want to set up different stores or perhaps do group work. The Notional-Functional syllabus is an organized guideline for communicative competence.

The teacher can create many different situations from the syllabus and the class can be divided into groups to perform different tasks, thereby freeing the teacher so he can float from one group to another in order to assist on a more individual level of instruction. The objective of student-centered teaching is thereby realized. Students not only are able to do more speaking but because of the smaller group size, they are more motivated to speak. Once in a small group, a person has a tendency to speak more because only a few people will hear him and not the whole class. The small group tasks can become the factor which motivates the learner a great deal. The learner can use the language realistically, make mistakes, but still feel a sense of accomplishment.

By using a Notional-Functional syllabus, the teacher may have to reconsider his policy on grading errors. Guntermann and Phillips warn:

> The role of error should be considered carefully; errors that impede communication are more serious than those that are indicative of the non-native but intelligible. Teachers may wish to be more critical of errors within the range of the item that is being focused upon than those that are only peripheral.... Individual performances can be rated and subsequent suggestions for improvement can be made at a level accurate for that

learner.[12]

3.6 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The writer has been using the basic theory of the Notional-Functional approach in her first-year French classes. Units were chosen as to the needs of the students such as:

1. Classroom expressions and objects
2. The family
3. The house
4. The weather, dates, seasons, months
5. Food

Approximately two weeks were spent on each unit while at the same time the textbook was being adapted to fit the Notional-Functional concept. The students appear to enjoy the Notional-Functional approach much more than the structural syllabus. They can grasp the sense of usefulness much easier and in turn, they became more self-confident in using the language. They are able to talk about themselves, their likes, dislikes, school and their home. When the learner can relate a concept to himself, he not only can understand it faster but will be able to use it without having to think because it becomes natural. For example, when using possessive adjectives, the learner does not have to stop to think to use "mon" or "ma" with "père". It becomes automatic because the learner has utilized what is

important to him in order to learn. Grammar seems easier to teach since it had been previously used in context. The students understand the grammar better because they utilize it with a purpose. If the needs of the learner are addressed, he will perform better and be successful because the learning is contextual with a Notional-Functional syllabus. Thus, because the student has a personal interest in what is happening and what he is doing, he will pay attention and learn. This all leads to what a teacher always wants to do: to motivate. The fact that the student is motivated will open the door for the development of oral proficiency or whichever skills are being emphasized.

No weaknesses have been identified while using the Notional-Functional approach. The theory seems excellent and there are myriad applications of it for the classroom. What is lacking are pilot programs to implement the approach. The best research is that done in the classroom because, in the end, it will be the classroom teacher who will be the final judge of the Notional-Functional approach.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Theoretically, the Notional-Functional approach is sound and purposeful. It will take much planning, dedication and execution to have it realize its potential. If curriculum developers decide to implement oral proficiency through the use of a Notional-Functional

syllabus, their program has a good chance of being successful. Enthusiasm complemented by an orally proficient teacher and motivated students is the key to sound language learning. There have been many approaches in the past and there will be many more in the future; however, the Notional-Functional approach is worthy of examination. In the future, if teachers take only bits and pieces from the Notional-Functional concept to incorporate into their program and to improve their teaching, then perhaps the theory will have fulfilled its purpose.

No approach to teaching is perfect nor is any teacher. Improvement is always needed and that can only happen if there is unity in the foreign language teaching profession. The Notional-Functional approach is a way to unify the many professionals into forming realistic and similar goals for the students. It could be concluded that the Notional-Functional concept has the potential to make language learning more enjoyable and beneficial because of the use of the real language in its natural context. Language is living and it changes faster than one imagines. If the main goal of foreign language learning is accepted as being oral proficiency, then instructors must be trained to accomplish this objective. In order for a student to function on his own outside of the classroom, a change in syllabus design must be considered.

The implementation of a Notional-Functional syllabus is

instrumental in developing proficiency in the four language skills. It not only facilitates the students' transition from one culture to the other but a Notional-Functional syllabus creates a sense of reality. This transition must be strengthened if foreign language study is to remain strong, purposeful, and effective.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1]D. A. Wilkins, Notional Syllabuses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p.6.

[2]D. A. Wilkins, Notional Syllabuses: Theory into Practice, ERIC ED 161 295 (March 1976), pp. 5-12.

[3]Cf. Level Performance Charts, Paris, IBM (1974), as discussed by Wilkins (March 1976), p. 6.

[4]Wilkins (March 1976), p. 7.

[5]Wilkins (March 1976), p. 7.

[6]Wilkins (March 1976), p. 12. See Chapter 2.4 for further discussion.

[7]Sandra Lee McKay, "On Notional Syllabuses," Modern Language Journal 64 (Summer 1980), p. 184.

[8]Gail Guntermann and June K. Phillips, Functional-Notional Concepts: Adapting the Foreign Language Textbook (Washington D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982), pp. 25-38. Steps one, two, and three are discussed in Section 2.6.

[9]Sandra J. Savignon, Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1983).

[10]Savignon, p. 214.

[11]Activities in this section are chosen from Guntermann and Phillips, pp. 44-55.

[12]Guntermann and Phillips, p. 60.

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APPENDIX

THE ACTFL PROVISIONAL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

In 1981, the Executive Council of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) identified language proficiency as one of its priority areas. Guidelines were created for the five language skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing, and culture. They were designed to guide curriculum and materials development as well as to provide goals for teachers and students. The guidelines are not meant to be a substitute for methodology but rather, to be integrated into the total language program as a tool for measuring language proficiency. Because the major thrust of this thesis concerns oral proficiency, only the provisional generic descriptions for speaking are listed below.

Novice-Low: Unable to function in the spoken language. Oral production is limited to occasional isolated words. Essentially no communicative ability.

Novice-Mid: Able to operate only in a very limited capacity within very predictable areas of need. Vocabulary limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs and courtesy formulae. Syntax is fragmented, inflections and word endings frequently omitted, confused or distorted and the majority of utterances consist of isolated words or short formulae. Utterances rarely consist of more than two or three words and are marked by frequent long pauses and repetition of an interlocutor's words. Pronunciation is frequently unintelligible and is strongly influenced by first language. Can be understood only with difficulty, even by persons such as teachers who are used to speaking with non-native speakers or in interactions where the context strongly supports the utterance.

Novice-High: Able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only where this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. There is no real autonomy of expression, although there may be some emerging signs of spontaneity and flexibility. There is a slight increase in utterance length but frequent long pauses and repetition of interlocutor's words still occur. Most utterances are telegraphic and word endings are often omitted, confused, or distorted. Vocabulary is limited to areas of immediate survival needs. Can differentiate most phonemes when

produced in isolation but when they are combined in words or groups of words, errors are frequent and, even with repetition, may severely inhibit communication even with persons used to dealing with such learners. Little development in stress and intonation is evident.

Intermediate-Low: Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements, and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations. When asked to do so, is able to formulate some questions with limited constructions and much inaccuracy. Almost every utterance contains fractured syntax and other grammatical errors. Vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs. Strong interference from native language occurs in articulation, stress, and intonation. Misunderstandings frequently arise from limited vocabulary and grammar and erroneous phonology but, with repetition, can generally be understood by native speakers in regular contact with foreigners attempting to speak their language. Little precision in information conveyed owing to tentative state of grammatical development and little or no use of modifiers.

Intermediate-Mid: Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands. Is able to formulate some questions when asked to do so. Vocabulary permits discussion of topics beyond basic survival needs such as personal history and leisure-time activities. Some evidence of grammatical accuracy in basic constructions, for example, subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, some notion of inflection.

Intermediate-High: Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Shows some spontaneity in language production but fluency is very uneven. Can initiate and sustain a general conversation but has little understanding of the social conventions of conversation. Developing flexibility in a range of circumstances beyond immediate survival needs. Limited vocabulary range necessitates much hesitation and circumlocution. The commoner tense forms occur but errors are frequent in formation and selection. Can use most question forms. While some word order is established, errors still occur in more complex patterns. Cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances or unfamiliar situations. Ability to describe and give precise information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features such as pronouns and verb inflections, but many are unreliable, especially if less immediate in reference. Extended discourse is largely a series of short, discrete utterances.

Articulation is comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners, and can combine most phonemes with reasonable comprehensibility, but still has difficulty in producing certain sounds, in certain positions, or in certain combinations, and speech will usually be labored. Still has to repeat utterances frequently to be understood by the general public. Able to produce some narration in either past or future.

Advanced: Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information; can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties. Has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions; accent, though often quite faulty, is intelligible; can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.

Advanced Plus: Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weaknesses or unevenness in one of the foregoing or

in pronunciation result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness range from simple constructions such as plurals, articles, prepositions, and negatives to more complex structures such as tense usage, passive constructions, word order, and relative clauses. Normally controls general vocabulary with some groping for everyday vocabulary still evident. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech, but under tension or pressure language may break down.

Superior: Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Vocabulary is broad enough that speaker rarely has to grope for a word; accent may be obviously foreign; control of grammar good; errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

VITA

Elaine F. Laine was born on July 25, 1951 in Huntington, Indiana and is an American citizen. She graduated from Huntington County Community High School, Huntington, Indiana, in 1969. She received her Bachelor of Arts in French and Education from Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, in 1973. She teaches French, German, and Spanish in the Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Schools, sponsors French clubs, and is the Department Chairperson.

She is currently an executive board member for the Greater Washington Association of Teachers of Foreign Languages (GWATFL) serving as the Virginia Delegate-at-Large. In 1985, she was nominated for the GWATFL Distinguished Foreign Language Educator Award.